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### Testimony before the Government Administration and Elections Committee on Section 2 of S.B. 361 An Act Revising the State Code of Ethics

March 7, 2016

Good afternoon, my name is Kristen Noelle Hatcher. I am the managing attorney of the public benefits unit at Connecticut Legal Services, Inc., a non-profit civil law firm dedicated to helping low-income people access justice. I am testifying today on behalf of our clients and the many other low-income residents of this state.

We support the changes in S.B. 361 Section 2, which would strengthen the current statute that delineates which individuals are subject to the State Code of Ethics for Public Officials.

This bill will ensure that all public officials, state governing bodies, quasi-public agencies and the like will be subject to this code.

This will close a loophole that presently exempts the committee members of an agency that engages in significant grant making, has vast authority that exceeds that of most of the state's taskforces and councils from signing the State Code of Ethics. The State Innovation Model (SIM) is an example of such an agency. I am a member of one of its subcommittees, the Equity and Access Council.

SIM's members are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor. It is a new agency, and was likely, not foreseen when the current bill was crafted. SIM receives \$45 million dollars from the federal government. It intends to transform the state's entire healthcare system. In doing this, it makes grants to health systems, practices and consultants. SIM and its committees propose standards and payment models for health care that will affect at least 80% of Connecticut residents within the next five years. This agency and those like it should be subject to the State Code of Ethics.

With this code in place, this and other like agencies will avoid the appearance of a conflict or an actual conflict, as there is clear, time tested guidance.

Last year, several of the SIM Committee members, myself included, were told that we had to sign a far less stringent ethics policy or we would be removed from our committees. Several of the committee members, myself included, opted to sign an alternate version that included the far less stringent policy *and* bound us voluntarily to the State Code of Ethics; however, legislation is needed to ensure that all such members, especially those with a conflict of interest, will be bound to the State Code of Ethics.

The Code has been used by countless councils and taskforces which have successfully engaged stakeholders and achieved broad input. We hope that you will pass this bill and strengthen the integrity of our state's decision making bodies.

